

**Toxic water**

ACCORDING to a recent report in this paper, samples of chicken feed and water collected from various poultry farms across Karachi for lab testing at the Karachi University were found to have traces of heavy metals in them. The amount of lead, nickel, copper, iron and chromium found in poultry feed exceeded the WHO guidelines. Meanwhile, the water sample contained significant amounts of iron, lead and nickel, along with arsenic. According to the researchers, the source of the contamination was linked to the untreated industrial waste being dumped into the rivers, lakes and sea, and the mixing of sewerage lines with water lines. This revelation should not come as a surprise to even those who give the headlines only a cursory glance. Words upon words — and warnings — have been written in these pages about the damage caused to the environment and public health due to untreated industrial waste, sewage and plastics directly entering water bodies. In case it bears any repeating, our water is toxic. And not only does this impact marine life, but the poison finds its way into the bodies of land mammals and birds. Exposure to metals, for instance, leads to a range of health problems that include damage to the lungs and kidneys, as well as the central nervous, respiratory, cardiovascular and reproductive systems.

Rarely is food and water tested in labs, and food authorities struggle to find the required human resources and capital to tackle the enormous challenges before them. But the problem of contaminated food and water is too large for a single authority to tackle. In fact, it is the failure of the state to effectively govern and one of the discontents of unchecked capitalism devoid of any social consciousness or a sense of responsibility towards the public's welfare that must primarily be blamed. The natural law is: what goes around, comes around.

**Editorial**